

North Jersey Market To Now Sell Hay

BY ED SHAMY
Northwest New Jersey
Correspondent

HACKETTSTOWN — The long hayride may be over for farmers in northwestern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania.

The North Jersey Livestock Auction Market, long a respected place to sell cattle, eggs, chickens, and other commodities, will begin to sell hay on Tuesday, September 23.

Buyers and sellers who take advantage of the auction will be spared the ride to the closest hay markets in Ephrata and New Holland, both of which are well over an hour's drive from this region along the Delaware River.

Auction master Al Nunn, who presides at the weekly auction in eastern Warren County, said the market's executive board had been considering the addition of hay to its list of commodities for several years.

The final decision came after Duane Copley, the district manager of the Warren County Soil Conservation District, made a convincing pitch to include hay.

Copley told the board that the creation of a formal hay market could help soil conservationists convince area growers to stabilize erosion-prone hillsides and would reflect dramatic changes in the agriculture of the region.

The auction market executive board, already endowed with the necessary space and the available time to undertake the hay auction, agreed.

The sale was created primarily for the common hay products grown in the area — alfalfa, timothy, clover, orchard grass and the mixed bales — but Nunn said that mulch hay, straw, ear corn, baled corn fodder and other grain-related products would also be sold.

The sale will be held in the open air in a meadow across Stiger Street from the auction market. Vendors can sell their hay by the ton or by the bale, said Nunn. Those who have their forage auctioned by weight will be required to present to the auctioneers a certified weight slip. A list of certified scales in the area is being distributed to potential sellers.

Nunn said the livestock market's executive board waived a suggestion that the hay auction be held on a trial basis, convinced

that it will draw a market from those producers and buyers who have traditionally traveled to southeastern Pennsylvania and into New York State to swap hay.

Copley believes that many growers will be interested in the Hackettstown hay sales because, for some, it costs as much as \$30 per ton to ship the bales of feed to distant markets.

Sellers will also benefit because they will be paid promptly for their hay, according to Copley.

Nunn confirmed that the payments for items sold at the auction are issued on Thursdays. The auction is held each Tuesday, year-round.

Copley said that when farmers sell to other farmers, they often agree upon the price of the hay, but don't receive payment for weeks, or even months. The auction market can improve cash flow for financially pinched growers, he said.

For Copley and the conservation district, the new hay market

comes as a victory that could make the erosion-control argument more effective.

Warren County is New Jersey's most concentrated dairy area. Hunterdon County, to the south, is ranked among the top producers of milk. And immediately across the Delaware River, dairy is a prime agricultural industry in Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

But increasingly, dairymen are leaving the business and getting into cash crops and more specialty cropping. And perhaps the most rapid growth has been in horse industry. There are no fewer than 10 horse race tracks within 100 miles of the area, and breeders and trainers have responded by building their stables in the mountainous area. New Jersey is among the leaders of the states with the most number of standardbred and thoroughbred horses in the country.

Many of the horse breeders, however, don't grow their own feed, and depend on area farmers to fill the void.

Dairy farmers, too, are slowly converting their farms to cash crops. More than 2,500 head were accepted into the federal government's dairy herd buyout program, with more than 30 farmers participating in the three counties.

Copley said many of the participants have come to his office, asking how to fill their fields now that they don't need silage and other feed programs exclusive for dairy cattle.

Most, said Copley, don't want to compete in the corn, soybean and wheat arenas because of severely depressed prices. And the lag gives a great opportunity to conservationists who want to see hays and legumes planted on erodible land.

The crops are "a fantastic reducer of erosion on farm ground," said Copley.

"It makes our selling conservation a lot easier, if I can tell somebody to strip crop with hay and sell through the auction," said

Copley. "Now we can point to a market for them."

The result could be financially healthier farmers.

"A lot of these guys could do better financially if they took some of this ground they have now in corn and started establishing some hay," said Copley.

Nunn said the livestock market will test the hay market and will determine how busy it gets and how much time it demands.

Currently, it's slated for 11 a.m. on auction days, when there is ordinarily a lull in activity and two auctioneers are free.

If the hay draws many vendors, it is conceivable that a special day just for the forage could be established at the market, Nunn said.

There's no way, yet, to predict if that will be needed.

But those who have worked to get the hay auction rolling are enthusiastic enough that they don't have much trouble envisioning a bustling market.

Northumberland Farmer Cited For Conservation Efforts

SUNBURY — Barry Woodruff, a Northumberland County farmer, has been selected as Conservationist of the Month for August by the board of directors of the Northumberland County Conservation District. The announcement was made by Robert Pardoe, Jr., district chairman.

Woodruff, 24, is being honored for his efforts in developing and implementing a soil conservation plan on a farm that he recently purchased. He has installed 36

acres of contour stripcropping, a 1000-foot sod waterway, and 2800 feet of subsurface drainage. Future conservation activities, including the construction of a 800-foot sod waterway next year, are being planned.

"When I bought the farm, I knew it needed some work," said Woodruff. "I grew up on my dad's farm just down the road. I noticed that when it rained hard the creek at the bottom of the hill always ran muddy. I knew it was topsoil from

this farm because there aren't any other farms above it that drain this way," explained Woodruff.

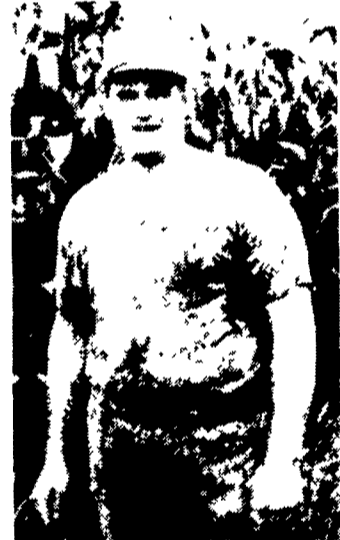
Soil Conservation is a good investment, according to Woodruff. "We know it's going to pay," said Woodruff. "Keeping the soil in place is going to help our crop yields. You have to control the runoff or all your topsoil will be gone."

Woodruff has had to reshape his new farm in other ways. Two months after he purchased the farm, the house where he and his wife and two children lived was completely destroyed by fire. "It happened the Sunday before Christmas," said Woodruff. "We lost everything in the fire but, fortunately, we weren't at home when it happened. It isn't so bad if you lose everything, as long as nobody gets hurt." The Woodruffs have recently completed the construction of a new home.

Despite the setback, Woodruff remains optimistic about his future and the future of agriculture. "My dad said that when he started out, things were real bad for about seven years," said Woodruff. "He made it, and I

think we will too. Things are bad right now but they have to get better. People that manage their farms right will make it."

Woodruff is the first recipient of the conservation district's new monthly award. The award will be used to recognize the conservation activities and accomplishments of farmers, community leaders, and other individuals.



Barry Woodruff

'Clear Title' Rules

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has put in place final clear title rules of the 1985 Food Security Act, which say, beginning Dec. 24, purchasers will be allowed to take clear title to farm products unless they are notified of an existing lien.

Each state decides for itself whether to establish a notification, system. However, unless lenders notify potential buyers or states develop a central notification system, buyers would take clear title to farm products even though a lien exists, just as with other products under provisions of the Uniform Commercial Code.

B.H. (Bill) Jones, head of

USDA's Packers and Stockyards Administration, said one key change in the final rules involves the fees states may charge for maintaining and publishing a list of liens.

"We have concluded that the law does not give the Secretary of Agriculture authority with respect to fees," Jones said.

Questions should be addressed to the Office of the Administrator, Room 3039 Building, P&SA/USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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